

# LOOK MORE CLOSELY. WHAT HAVE YOU MISSED?

The illustrations in this issue, Jon Lezinsky's multi-layered commentaries on human diversity, suggest an analogy with God's work, Missouri-style. As in much of the Heartland, nature here is largely devoid of drama. Those passing through, or newly arrived, might yearn for, say, the sweeping vistas of the Rockies or Smokies, the rich colors of Arizona's red-rock country, or the nation's coastal waters that merge with the horizon, invoking infinity. It's rare in Missouri that God's work will turn your head. You have to turn it yourself. As with Lezinsky's art, you have to watch closely for small surprises in this region of bygone prairies where beauty could easily be missed.



PAMELA  
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For example, if I walk slowly along the road in my exurban neighborhood, or lingeringly in the woods that surround my house, here are some of the things I might see: lichen etching Escher-like patterns into the bark of trees. Moss, vibrant and velvety, smoothing out the ridges on rocks jutting from gentle

slopes. Johnny-jump-ups emerging helter-skelter in early spring, dainty purple and yellow treasures heralding a succession of wildflowers to come — showings of colors, shapes and forms to reward those willing to go along with a bit of hide-and-seek.

Jaunty bluebells, rose verbena and stately phlox. Tucked-away trillium. Mayapples and Christmas ferns. The raggedy pink blooms of bee balm, the dense paprika-colored heads of butterfly weed. Vining sweat peas, soft lavender asters and arching goldenrod. Even native Prickly Pear. And that's to name just a few.

My favorite of the Missouri natives, the humble bellwort, fairly begs to be missed. It is named for its pendulous, bell-shaped yellow blossom, and were that the most this plant had to offer, it would hardly be worth hunting in surrounding seas of green for its seemingly indistinctive shoots. But the payoff isn't

in the blossom. It's in the structure of the plant itself. At evenly-spaced intervals, the bases of its leaves are threaded along a single stem as if an invisible seamstress had laced them there.

Looking upward yields other surprises. The owl nearly hidden where large branches of a towering oak tree meet. Unassuming bluebirds perched on electrical lines, deceptively displaying their soft gray outer feathers. They could easily be mistaken for something else — until they take to their characteristic bobbing flight, sending out flashes of bright blue.

Listening, too, calls for training. It would be easy to confuse the sound of hungry pileated woodpeckers grinding out caverns in rotting trees with that of a neighbor putting on an addition down the road.

Similarly, Lezinsky's art is replete with subtleties. So sit with it a bit. Be alert to the symbols lurking in those dark backgrounds, to the variations of colors and forms revealing the dimensions of human beauty and beliefs.

Only then, crank up the left side of your brain and turn to the articles in the special section, packed as they are with information about ways Catholic health leaders are dealing with our nation's exploding diversity and some just-emerging trends. See how they flow right into two "Thinking Globally" pieces that speak of Africans, far away and close to home.

And finally, let your emotions get involved in Sr. Nuala Kenny's compelling lament.

Like Missouri's woodlands and byways, this issue's rewards will come best to those who slow down, pay attention and reflect.



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